

## Message Text

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53

ACTION COA-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-13 ADP-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 PM-07 L-03 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 CG-00 COME-00 INT-08 EB-11

DOT-00 RSR-01 /096 W

----- 097183

O R 301350Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3909

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USEC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USUN NEW YORK 360

USMISSION NATO

USOECD PARIS 499

USMISSION GENEVA

CINCLANT

COMICEDEFOR

NISRA KEFLAVIK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR IC UK

SUBJECT: FISHERIES DISPUTE: ICELANDIC COAST GUARDSMAN KILLED

IN ACCIDENT RELATED TO RAMMING INCIDENT

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. ICELANDIC COAST GUARDSMAN WAS ELECTROCUTED  
AUGUST 29 WHILE ATTEMPTING WELDING REPAIRS TO HULL OF CUTTER  
AEGIR DAMAGED IN COLLISION WITH BRITISH FRIGATE APOLLO. MEDIA  
CHARACTERIZED DEATH AS FIRST CASUALTY IN COD WAR. STRONG PUBLIC  
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REACTION AGAINST BRITISH ANTICIPATED. INCIDENT ALSO LIKELY TO

AROUSE CRITICISM OF NATO AND US WHICH WILL BE BLAMED FOR FAILING TO FORCE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TRAWLER PROTECTION FLEET. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ARE TRANSLATIONS OF OFFICIAL ICELANDIC COAST GUARD PRESS RELEASES DATED AUGUST 29 AND AUGUST 30 DESCRIBING (1) THE RAMMING INCIDENT AND (2) THE ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF THE COAST GUARDSMAN.

3. FIRST PRESS RELEASE: "AT ABOUT NOON TODAY THE BRITISH FRIGATE APOLLO F 70 MADE REPEATED ATTEMPTS AT RAMMING THE CUTTER AEGIR WHERE THE SHIPS WERE LOCATED 38 NAUTICAL MILES NORTHWEST OF GRIMSEY. THE CUTTER MANAGED TO AVOID A COLLISION TO BEGIN WITH BUT AFTER REPEATED ATTEMPTS THE FRIGATE SUCCEEDED IN RAMMING THE PORT SIDE OF THE CUTTER AND BOTH VESSELS SUSTAINED SOME DAMAGE. THE CUTTER WAS SAILING SOUTHWEST OF KOLBEINSEY WHEN THE BRITISH FRIGATE HEADED FOR IT. THE FRIGATE EMPLOYED THE SAME METHOD AS THE TUG-BOATS AND THE FRIGATES HAVE USED, I.E.. TO STEAM UP TO THE CUTTER TURN AND TRY TO SLAM THE STERN INTO THE SIDE OF THE GUNBOAT. AFTER REPEATED ATTEMPTS THE FRIGATE SUCCEEDED IN SLAMMING ITS STERN INTO THE CUTTER AND THE STERNS OF THE VESSELS COLLIDED. THE FOLLOWING DAMAGE WAS SUSTAINED BY THE AEGIR: A RUPTURE WAS CREATED AT THE TOP OF THE ELECTRICAL GENERATOR COMPARTMENT WHICH CAUSED A SMALL LEAK. THE FRIGATE SUSTAINED SEVEN BENT STAYS ON ITS STARBOARD SIDE ABOUT ONE AND A HALF FEET BELOW THE DECK. THE CUTTER AEGIR HAD NOT OBSERVED ANY BRITISH TAWLERS FROM LANGANES AND NO BRITISH TRAWLERS WERE SIGHTED NEAR THE PLACE OF THE COLLISION. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE COLLISION WAS DELIBERATE ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH FRIGATE APOLLO."

4. PRESS RELEASE AUGUST 30: "HALLDOR HALLFREDSSON, SECOND MACHINIST ON THE CUTTER AEGIR, DIED YESTERDAY ABOARD HIS VESSEL AS A RESULT OF AN ELECTRICAL SHOCK WHICH HE RECEIVED WHEN HE WAS REPAIRING DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE BRITISH FRIGATE APOLLO TO THE AEGIR EARLIER THAT DAY. AS STATED EARLIER THE ELECTRICAL GENERATOR COMPARTMENT OF THE CUTTER AEGRI SUSTAINED A LEAK AFTER THE RAMMING BY THE APOLLO. IT WAS DECIDED TO CARRY OUT PROVISIONAL REPAIRS ON THE VESSEL AND ARC WELD THE HOLES THAT WERE CAUSING THE LEAK. THE AEGIR WAS ABOUT 12 NAUTICAL MILES FROM GRIMSEY. THE BRITISH FRIGATE APOLLO WAS A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY AND OSTENSIBLY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DAMAGE ABOARD THE VESSEL WAS BEING INVESTIGATED. THE FRIGATE CONTACTED THE TUGBOAT STATESMAN WHICH ALSO WAS A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY AND REQUESTED ITS ASSISTANCE. THE TUGBOAT ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND STARTED BY SAILING IN A THREATENING MANNER STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE AEGIR. THEN IT WAS DECIDED TO GO INSIDE THE 12-MILE LIMIT WHERE THE CUTTER CREW CONSIDERED THEMSELVES SAFE AGAINST THE HARASSMENT OF THE BRITISH VESSELS AND THE REPAIRS WERE CONTINUED. WHEN THE STATESMAN DID NOT OBSERVE THE 12-MILE

LIMIT AND CONTINUED AT FULL SPEED INSIDE THE 12-MILE LIMIT IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CUTTER, IT WAS DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE REPAIRS OF THE AEGIR AND SAIL AWAY FROM THE TUGBOAT. A WAVE CAME OVER THE GUNWHALE OF THE AEGIR WHERE HALLDOR WAS CARRYING THE ARC SELDING EQUIPMENT. HE SUFFERED AN ELECTRICAL SHOCK AND LOST CONSCIOUSNESS IMMEDIATELY. RESUSCITATION ATTEMPTS WERE STARTED IMMEDIATELY, BUT THEY WERE IN VAIN. HALLDOR HALLFREDSSON WAS 33 YEARS OLD AND RESIDED AT HRAUNBAE 84 IN REYKJAVIK. HE LEAVES A WIFE, JULIANA HELGADOTTIR, AND A ONE-YEAR-OLD SON."

5. IF ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED IN FOREGOING ARE ACCURATE, INCIDENT HAS TWO ESPECIALLY CRITICAL ASPECTS. FIRST, BRITISH FRIGATE APPEARS TO HAVE UNDERTAKEN HOSTILE ACTION IN ABSENCE OF PROVOCATIVE HARASSMENT BY ICELANDIC VESSEL AGAINST BRITISH TRAWLERS. SECOND, COAST GUARDSMAN DIED WITHIN 12-MILE TERRITORIAL WATERS WHICH HAD BEEN VIOLATED BY BRITISH VESSEL. WHETHER OR NOT DEATH WAS DIRECT RESULT OF WAVE RAISED BY TUG STATESMAN OR BY EVASIVE ACTION OF AEGIR IS IRRELEVANT FROM ICELANDIC POINT OF VIEW. PUBLIC OPINION PREPARED TO ACCEPT INTERPRETATION THAT CREWMAN DIED BECAUSE OF UNPROVOKED BRITISH ATTACK AGAINST SMALL ICELANDIC UNIT OPERATING WITHIN LEGALLY ACCEPTED TERRITORIAL WATERS.

6 SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT SITUATION WAS REGARDED AS SERIOUS AND WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE EFFECTS NOT ONLY ON RELATIONS WITH BRITISH BUT ALSO "OTHER INTERESTS," CLEARLY A REFERENCE TO ICELAND'S NATO MEMBERSHIP AND THE IMPENDING KEFLAVIK BASE NEGOTIATIONS.

7. AS OF 1230 LOCAL TIME THERE HAS BEEN NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLIC MEETINGS OR DEMONSTRATIONS TO PROTEST THE INCIDENT. WE BELIEVE THERE IS A STRONG LIKELIHOOD OF SOME PROTEST ACTION, PERHAPS OVER THE WEEKEND. IRVING

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 30 AUG 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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